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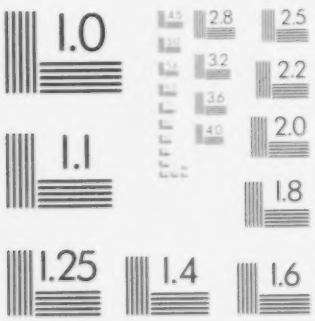

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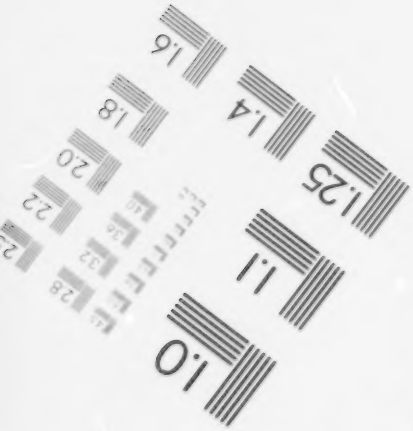

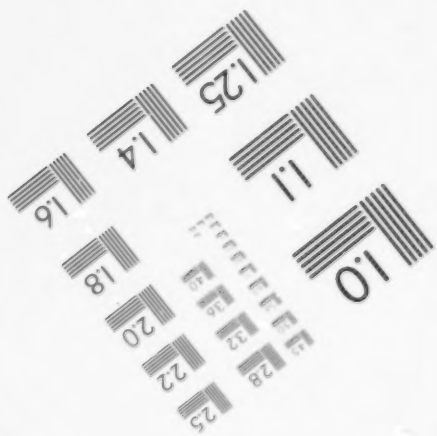

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 29th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 8 November 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sial (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Pakistan)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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In the absence of Ms. Wensley (Australia), Mr. Sial (Pakistan), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 121: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*) (A/54/6/Rev.1, A/54/7 and A/54/16)

First reading (continued)

Section 12. Environment (continued)

1. **Mr. Peixoto** (Brazil) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made previously by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on sections 12 (Environment) and 13 (Human settlements) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and reiterated that his country was committed to environmental protection and, more generally, to the concept of sustainable development.

2. Like the Guyanese delegation and those of other countries, his delegation considered that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) required adequate, stable and predictable resources in order to discharge its mandate and to strengthen its role, in fulfilment of Agenda 21. While extrabudgetary resources for supplementary activities were to be welcomed, they could not finance core activities. In that connection, his delegation associated itself with the concern expressed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at the fact that extrabudgetary contributions accounted for a major portion of the funds of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

3. His delegation endorsed the recommendations of CPC and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) concerning sections 12 and 13 of the programme budget and it had taken note in that connection of the reformulated narratives submitted in documents A/C.5/54/20 and A/C.5/54/16, respectively.

4. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation, which fully associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, had considered carefully the reformulated narrative of section 12 (Environment) (A/C.5/54/20), which had been prepared on the basis of the recommendations of CPC. It wondered whether paragraph 12.10 of the reformulated narrative took account of all the issues raised in General Assembly resolution 53/242.

5. Her delegation, which shared the concern of other delegations at the reduction of $42.7 million in the resources requested for the biennium 2000-2001 compared with the 1998-1999 appropriations for environment-related activities, feared that the General Assembly's recommendations for supplementary resources had not been taken into account. However, it welcomed the fact that the reformulated narrative of section 12 incorporated the changes requested with respect to substantive activities and the servicing of intergovernmental bodies, in accordance with budgetary procedures.

6. She expressed regret that the reformulated narrative of section 12 indicated the follow-up action taken to implement the recommendations of the internal and external oversight bodies and the Advisory Committee. Indeed, it was a cause for concern that the Secretariat had taken the initiative of referring to reports that had not yet been approved by the General Assembly, particularly since some of the issues raised were the subject of negotiations in the Assembly. That was the case, in particular, with respect to results-based budgeting and the use of performance indicators. She also observed that certain recommendations went beyond the mandate of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, including those related to the allocation of resources.

7. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), responding to the objections raised by the Cuban delegation, said that the Office of Internal Oversight Services made recommendations of an internal nature and that the Secretariat did not need the authorization of the governing organs to implement them. It was a question of following normal procedure.

8. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation hoped nevertheless that the Secretariat would act with greater restraint in interpreting the decisions of the General Assembly and that it would take into account the status of negotiations on issues that were not within the competence of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, particularly when the Assembly had not yet concluded its consideration of such issues, as was the case with results-based budgeting.

9. **The Chairman** said that, in the absence of further comments, he took it that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 12 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations.

10. *It was so decided.*

Section 13. Human settlements (*continued*)

11. **Mr. Monthe** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) made the same comments on section 13 (Human settlements) as he had made on the previous sections. A reformulated narrative of section 13

(A/C.5/54/16) had been issued, as requested by CPC. The Fifth Committee's task was to ensure that the reformulated narrative was in conformity with the medium-term plan and the other decisions of the deliberative organs, as well as the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, and that it met current standards as far as the format was concerned.

12. **Mr. Demir** (Turkey), making some general remarks, said that his delegation on the whole supported the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, which it considered consistent with General Assembly resolution 53/206, in which the main priority areas had been identified, and with the Secretary-General's reform programme. Although the overall level of resources requested was only 0.2 per cent higher than in the preceding biennium and was $10 million less than had been foreseen in the budget outline adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 53/206, his delegation believed that the proposed amount was, more or less, a true reflection of the real needs of the Organization.

13. Nevertheless, slight adjustments were necessary. Turkey, which had been the host country for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), considered that the resources requested for the special session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (Istanbul+5), were insufficient, and noted with concern that the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements was too heavily reliant on extrabudgetary resources. The projections relating to those resources, which would represent 86 per cent of the total, would therefore appear to be over-optimistic. He hoped that further information on the source of those funds would be forthcoming.

14. **Ms. Buergo-Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that she welcomed the reformulated narrative of section 13 (A/C.5/54/16), which took into account the concerns that had been expressed at CPC meetings with regard to its conformity with the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and other relevant bodies.

15. Nevertheless, her delegation noted with concern that the activities outlined in section 13 were, to a large extent, dependent on extrabudgetary resources, whereas, given their importance, they should be allocated a stable resource base. It was, in particular, important that sufficient funding should be provided to ensure the success of the special session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. Furthermore, her delegation regretted that the reformulated narrative cited General Assembly resolution 53/242 without making provision for the financial resources required to implement that resolution, which was of crucial importance to the revitalization of the Centre. A modification in that regard would be welcome. Finally, she deplored the fact that the reformulated narrative of section 13 also mentioned recommendations made by internal and external oversight bodies that had not been endorsed by the General Assembly or other deliberative organs.

16. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) expressed his support for the statements made by the representative of Guyana, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative of Kenya, regarding sections 12 and 13. He emphasized that the remarks already made by his delegation with respect to UNEP were equally applicable to section 13 (Human settlements) with the presentation of which he was not satisfied. His delegation hoped that the terms "products" and "expected accomplishments" would be replaced respectively by "activities" and "performance indicators".

17. As the representative of Pakistan had already noted with regard to UNEP, it was disquieting to realize that the reformulated narrative of section 13 mentioned recommendations that had not been approved by the General Assembly or the relevant bodies. His delegation wished to know why the Secretariat had seen fit to proceed in that manner.

18. The Controller had, of course, explained the reasons for the high level of extrabudgetary funding in the financing of UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), but, in view of their importance, the activities of those bodies should enjoy a predictable, stable and reliable resource base. The General Assembly should therefore review some of its decisions in that respect.

19. His delegation understood that, owing to synchronization problems, it had not been possible to include some aspects of Habitat activities in the medium-term plan. Activities should, however, be planned in such a manner as to allow for their integration into the General Assembly's programme of work.

20. He wondered how the ideas of enhanced capacity and good governance were linked to the concepts of sustainable development and improved living conditions, and whether such activities came within the mandate of Habitat. He also wished to know to what extent section 13 had taken into account the restructuring of Habitat, whether the reduction in the number of its subprogrammes from four to two was compatible with the revitalization of the Centre, and whether the cost of the services provided by the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) had been taken into account. He

believed that programme support costs should be clearly indicated.

21. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that, in the case of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, it was normal for the percentage of extrabudgetary resources to be high, because the Centre dealt with technical cooperation and operational activities which were, by their very nature, funded by voluntary contributions. It was also in receipt of considerable funds from UNDP and other bodies for such purposes. With regard to the five-year review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), the resources requested had been considerably increased. The assimilation of Habitat and UNEP administrative services by the United Nations Office at Nairobi had made significant reductions in cost possible.

22. In response to the representative of Uganda, he stated that the activities in question had been approved by Habitat. Lastly, the explanations that he had given with regard to the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services concerning UNEP applied equally to Habitat.

23. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that he had not been able to hear the latest explanations and would like a written response.

24. **The Chairman** said that, in the absence of further comments, he took it that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 13 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and wished to refer the section to informal consultations.

25. *It was so decided.*

Section 14. Crime prevention and criminal justice (continued)

26. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) expressed his delegation's full support for the actions envisaged under section 14 and noted with satisfaction that the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations had been added to the programme of work of the Centre for International Crime Prevention. He was, however, concerned at the high rate of vacancies at the Centre — amounting to 16.7 per cent on 30 April 1999 — and asked where the level currently stood.

27. **Mr. Peixoto** (Brazil) said that in a situation where "uncivil" society had extended transnationally the Centre's programme of work was more essential than ever and indeed was one of the priorities of the medium-term plan. His delegation therefore welcomed the proposed additional resources allocated to it, a major part of which would come from extrabudgetary resources. It endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of CPS. It believed that the requested level of resources was acceptable, given that the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders was to be held in Vienna in 2000, and it supported the creation of an additional P-4 post, as recommended by the Advisory Committee in paragraph IV.85 of its report. Noting the unusually high percentage of vacancies, he requested the Secretariat to speed up recruitment.

28. **Mr. Tabb** (United States of America) unreservedly supported the Centre's programme of work, since its concerns closely corresponded with the strategic objectives considered among the most urgent by his Government. He was aware that the Centre needed adequate staff to carry out its work properly and therefore supported the creation of an additional P-4 post.

29. His delegation would welcome further details on the application of United Nations standards and norms and the use of model treaties, since the data contained in paragraph 14.20 of the proposed programme budget were too vague. To also seemed contradictory to terminate a recurrent publication, yet to disseminate the same information through the database of the United Nations Crime and Justice Information Network. His delegation also supported the recommendation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the activities of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division should be more in line with the programme priorities.

30. Paragraph 14.24 mentioned the elaboration of a protocol on computer-related crime and of a convention against corruption and bribery, but no decision had yet been adopted in that regard. Lastly, there was no urgent need for the Centre to get involved in action against all the many forms of terrorism and, for the time being, it ought rather to concentrate on the traditional forms.

31. **Mr. Kondo** (Japan) welcomed the high quality of the Centre's programme planning. He emphasized the crucial importance of planning in United Nations activities and the need to respect the mandates established by the legislative bodies. In that context, he drew the attention of the Fifth Committee to paragraph 2.53 of the CPC report with regard to the division of labour. His delegation supported the creation of a P-4 post, in accordance with the recommendation of ACABQ but requested further information on the new post.

32. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) fully endorsed the observations of CPC on section 14. He believed that the resources requested would cover the mandated activities. His delegation hoped that enough resources had been allocated for the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. It also reaffirmed the

need for close cooperation between the Centre and other bodies, including regional ones, and expressed its full support for the programme, particularly where trafficking in women and children was concerned. It wished to know who scrutinized the programme; it was surprised at the reduction from 35 to 15 of the number of reports to be submitted to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

33. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) noted the increase in the resources requested under section 14, amounting to 11.1 per cent. Her delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC. She wondered whether the reduction in the number of reports to be submitted to the Commission would have any impact on the implementation of its programme of work and requested more details of the special event mentioned in section 14.21 (b) (v). She also wished to know the current level of vacancies. She noted with concern that the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services featured in several sections of the proposed programme budget, even though the General Assembly had not yet reached a decision regarding them, while some — including those relating to resources — did not fall within the mandate of the Office.

34. **Mr. Park** (Republic of Korea) said that crime prevention and criminal justice were among the priorities of the medium-term plan. His delegation attached much importance to the fight against terrorism and welcomed the high profile that it had been given in the programme of work. His delegation supported the creation of three new posts but considered that the resources proposed for the biennium 2000-2001 were still inadequate for the mandated activities. It would prefer the indicators of expected accomplishments to be more precise.

35. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines) said that her delegation fully supported the activities contained in section 14 and the requested increase in resources. It supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC but regretted that the programme narrative made no mention of taking gender-specificity into account. Her Government attached particular importance to programmes relating to gender issues, trafficking in migrant workers and trafficking in women and children.

36. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that all the vacant posts had been filled. He recalled that the decision to reduce the number of reports submitted to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice had been taken by the Commission itself, which was a subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council, for the purpose of rationalization. The preparation of the two studies mentioned in paragraph 14.24 would, of course, be subject to the adoption of the convention against organized transnational crime. Paragraph 14.21 (b) (v) referred to an event that would be organized to publicize the possible adoption of that convention, with a view to persuading as many countries as possible to ratify it. Lastly, details on the functions to be assigned to the proposed new P-4 post, electronic publications and reports that were no longer issued would be provided in writing informal consultations.

37. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) said that he supported the increase in resources requested under section 14 and the inclusion of the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services in the proposed programme budget.

38. **The Chairman** said that, in the absence of other comments, he took it that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 14 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and that it wished to refer that section to informal consultations.

39. *It was so decided.*

Section 15. International drug control (continued)

40. **Mr. Kondo** (Japan) said he was pleased to note that section 15 of the proposed programme budget took into account the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly and that he welcomed the choice of priorities reflected in the programme of work. However, he was concerned about the high vacancy rate under subprogramme 2.

41. The Japanese delegation supported the establishment of a P-4 post, and emphasized that the normative functions of the International Narcotics Control Board required impartiality and independence, and should therefore be funded from the regular budget or from general resources. Some 70 to 80 per cent of Japan's contribution to the Fund for the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) was for general resources.

42. The Japanese delegation recommended that staffing levels should be strengthened at field offices rather than at Headquarters. Accordingly, it supported the establishment of a P-4 post under subprogramme 4. With respect to subprogramme 1, it felt that, in order to be complete, the *World Drug Report* should report on the steps taken by individual countries to address the drug problem and on the difficulties they had encountered. It supported the establishment of a P-3 post under subprogramme 1 and encouraged the Secretariat to observe the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the recruitment process.

43. **Mr. Tabb** (United States of America) said that drug abuse was a global problem that called for global solutions. He was pleased to note that the proposed programme of work stressed normative functions, that UNDCP had taken a balanced approach in defining countries' 5-year and 10-year objectives, in line with the decisions taken by the General Assembly at its special session, and that the role of UNDCP had been strengthened in the context of the proposed programme budget.

44. Nonetheless, the United States delegation noted, once again, the absence of indicators for measuring expected accomplishments and the vagueness of the narrative on that subject. It questioned whether the International Narcotics Control Board and its Standing Committee on Estimates needed to hold 120 meetings, as indicated in paragraph 15.45 (a), and asked for clarification of the number of reports to be issued by the Board. It was surprised that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and its subsidiary bodies had to hold the number of plenary and working group meetings indicated in paragraph 15.49. It asked for clarification of the number of publications to be issued on prevention among youth (para. 15.58 (b)) and on the number of thematic workshops (para. 15.58 (d)). Lastly, it regretted the vagueness of the responses of UNDCP to the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (table 15.20).

45. **Mr. Peixoto** (Brazil) said that he supported the requested funding increases. His delegation felt that the programme of work should take a more balanced approach to supply and demand and that more attention should be paid to the links between drugs and money-laundering. The narrative should recall the decisions taken by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session. In the interest of achieving the objectives set at the twentieth special session, Brazil supported the establishment of a P-4 post under subprogramme 4.

46. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her country wholeheartedly supported the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination. Her delegation wished to confirm that the objectives of the programme of work, as contained in section 15, were consistent with the corresponding objectives of the medium-term plan, and asked that they should be set forth with more precision. With respect to subprogramme 3, she recalled that, at its twentieth special session, the General Assembly had agreed to place more emphasis on that subprogramme in section 15. The recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, unless they were of an internal nature, should not appear in the proposed programme budget until they had been approved by the legislative bodies.

47. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that the narrative should be drafted in accordance with the decisions taken by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session. He endorsed the Secretary-General's comments and supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on section 15.

48. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines) said that she supported the requested funding increases and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. She welcomed the establishment of a Focal Point for Gender Mainstreaming and a Focal Point for the Advancement of Women (para. 15.13).

49. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that his delegation supported the requested funding increases and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. His country, which had become a crossroads for drug trafficking, hoped to benefit from the extrabudgetary resources to be used to support subregional and regional efforts to combat that scourge. In that connection, support should be provided for the work of subregional and regional agencies involved in combating the drug problem so that they could contribute to global efforts. He asked for details on the funding of the normative activities mentioned in paragraph 15.41.

50. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the vacancy rate had been 11.4 per cent on 30 April 1999 and that it had not changed since then. He recalled that the International Narcotics Control Board, which had been established pursuant to an international instrument, decided on the number of meetings it would hold and that the meetings in question had been approved by the Committee on Conferences. In reply to the representative of Uganda, he said that subprogramme 2 was funded in the amount of $8 million from the regular budget and $255,500 from the Fund for the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. He would provide further information on the subject in writing in informal consultations.

51. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) said that his delegation had no objection to increasing the funding for programmes defined as priorities in the medium-term plan, such as the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, crime prevention and criminal justice and international drug control. However, it did not see the need to do so for bodies which had been allocated considerable resources under sections 9 and 11 A and which could find the desired resources through internal adjustments and productivity gains.

52. **The Chairman** said that if there were no further comments he would take it that the Committee had

concluded its first reading of section 15 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and wished to send the section to the informal consultations.

53. *It was so decided.*

Section 16. Economic and social development in Africa

Section 17. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

Section 18. Economic development in Europe

Section 19. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Section 20. Economic and social development in Western Asia

Section 21. Regular programme of cooperation

54. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the estimated resources under the regular budget for activities under part V were US$ 381,195,500 gross. In its report, (A/54/7, para. V.1 to V.16), the Advisory Committee had welcomed the improvement in the narrative presentations and the new presentation of the chapters relating to the regional commissions, even though some areas required further improvement, particularly with regard to standardization of presentation. The Committee had recommended in particular that the regional commissions should develop standards that would include the workload levels relating to activities in the programme budget.

55. The Committee regretted that the regional commissions, which were developing new technologies for programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation, did not do more to share their experience and knowledge in that area, which could improve coordination and reduce costs. It considered that there should be greater leadership and guidance from Headquarters as to the optimum utilization of technological innovations in the regional commissions. The next step would be to link the programme systems already in place or under development with budgeting and control systems. If the General Assembly were to approve a change to result-based budgeting, such a link would become inevitable. Attention should also be given to the proper maintenance of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) once it had been installed in the regional commissions. Finally, in order to reduce costs and modernize work methods, the regional commissions might use new technologies such as remote translation and video-conferencing.

56. The majority of the regional commissions suffered from high vacancy situations. That was due to many factors, including inefficient personnel practices. The measures being taken by the Office of Human Resources Management and the secretariats of the regional commissions would only be fully effective if the Member States themselves addressed those policy issues at the intergovernmental level (paras. V.8 to V.10).

57. As in its first report on the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, the Advisory Committee had drawn attention to the significant reforms being conducted by the regional commissions in accordance with the new priorities set by their respective governing bodies. Nevertheless, there were many people who underestimated the ongoing process and thought that the United Nations and its constituents had kept to their old structures and ways of doing business.

58. **Mr. Barnwell** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed support for the programme of work undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) (section 16) of the proposed programme budget, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (section 17) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (section 19). The high vacancy rates in the regional commissions, particularly in the developing world, were, however, a matter of deep concern and the Secretary-General must take steps to recruit the staff that the commissions needed to carry out their programmes, as a question of priority.

59. With regard to section 16, of the proposed programme budget, economic and social development in Africa had been made one of the priority areas in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. ECA had carried out welcome reforms, especially by enhancing the subregional development centres. Yet, it was regrettable that the level of increase in the resources proposed for the biennium 2000-2001 was not commensurate with the announced priority. The Commission had to be provided with adequate resources to enable it to play a leading role in the development of Africa.

60. While the inclusion of two new subprogrammes in the proposed programme budget — Promoting the advancement of women and Supporting subregional activities for development — was welcome, they should be funded from additional resources and not through a redeployment of resources from other subprogrammes. ECA continued to lag in terms of computerization and utilization of information technologies and, despite the conclusions of a study it had submitted on the matter, the proposed programme budget

covered barely one third of the requirements. More resources should be allocated to the relevant subprogramme.

61. Since ESCAP was making an important contribution to development in Asia and the Pacific, it was disturbing that its budget had been reduced over the course of the two previous bienniums and that the trend continued. As CPC had recommended, the situation should be kept under review, especially in order to ensure that the implementation of mandated ESCAP programmes and activities was not adversely affected. A number of developing countries had rightly expressed concern about the change from the traditional mode of publication to the electronic mode and ACABQ had been right to urge ESCAP to take into account all relevant factors before deciding which mode of distribution was most appropriate to the needs of the users.

62. The Group of 77 and China reaffirmed their strong support for the programme of work of ECLAC, the only regional institution that had taken a systematic approach to the development issues facing the countries of the region. They welcomed the initiatives taken by ECLAC to address new challenges dealt with under subprogramme 5 (Social development and social equity), subprogramme 7 (Environmental and land resource sustainability) and subprogramme 12 (Mainstreaming the gender perspective into regional development). Subprogramme 12 could be funded through a redeployment of resources, but care should be taken to ensure that the redeployment did not prejudice the implementation of the subprogramme or any other ECLAC activities.

63. There were also a number of concerns relating to the resources allocated to some critical aspects of the ECLAC programme of work. Sufficient funds should be allocated to the Central American and Eastern Caribbean countries that had been struck by natural disasters. Also, account had to be taken of the differences that existed between the various countries of the region and it was necessary to ensure that the small countries benefited from ECLAC programmes and activities to the same extent as the large ones. In that connection, the Secretariat was asked to explain the methodology used in determining the resources allocated to the subregional office in Trinidad and Tobago.

64. Technical cooperation was essential to enable the 23 small States served by that subregional office to forge closer ties with other intergovernmental organizations and subregional groupings. Although partnerships between donors and recipients should be encouraged, they were not a substitute for technical cooperation. ECLAC should be provided with adequate, stable and predictable resources so that its member States, especially the smallest among them, could fully benefit from technical cooperation.

65. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt), associating himself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that his delegation was deeply concerned by the growing number of vacant posts in the regional commissions, in particular in the developing countries, and requested the Secretariat to spare no effort to fill those posts in order to enable the regional commissions to implement the mandated programmes.

66. Referring to the technological backwardness of the Economic Commission for Africa, he said that his country regretted that the provision made for 2000-2001 to remedy the situation was one third less than the needs identified in the study on that matter. His delegation pointed out, moreover, that the Regional Commissions New York Office played a very important role and must be provided with the necessary human resources, in particular with respect to information technology.

67. **Mr. Bouhaddou** (Algeria) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and approved the work programme of the Economic Commission for Africa which was a priority area of the medium-term plan. It welcomed the reform undertaken by ECA and considered that the Commission should be allocated more substantial resources in order to be in a position to play its proper role in the development of the continent.

68. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the increase in bilateral resources, which was the result of an energetic fund-raising campaign, and supported the continuing efforts to that end. It was concerned at the harmful impact which the high vacancy rate was likely to have on the implementation of the work programme. The use of consultants was no solution. His delegation noted that the vacancy rate had been 22 per cent as at 31 May 1999 and asked what was the current situation.

69. His country welcomed the establishment of two new subprogrammes: Promoting the advancement of women and Supporting subregional activities for development, but considered that they should be funded through an increase in the total resource base and not through the redeployment of resources. Subprogramme 4 should be strengthened in order to improve the technological capacity of ECA. The new Conference Centre at Addis Ababa should display greater dynamism and creativity in order to improve the utilization rate of its facilities.

70. His delegation endorsed the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph V.24 of its report concerning the need to ensure the clear delineation of responsibility between the development centres and the ECA secretariat in order to avoid duplication of functions. It noted with concern that there was no team of interpreters at ECA and that its editorial service was inadequate.

71. In conclusion, he said that his delegation associated itself with the comments made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph V.6 of its report to the effect that there was a need for greater transparency in the provision of information on the redeployment of resources together with clear explanations of the reasons for variances. It also approved the recommendation made in paragraph V.10 concerning the need to expedite the filling of vacant posts.

72. **Mr. Kondo** (Japan) reaffirmed the support of his delegation for the programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa which was one of the priority areas in the medium-term plan. The two new subprogrammes proposed were relevant but his delegation requested further explanations concerning the eighteen posts to be redeployed from other subprogrammes and the two new posts be established under subprogramme 6: Promoting the advancement of women (para. 16A.98 and 16A.99). His delegation wished in particular to know the specific job descriptions of the eighteen posts to be redeployed so as to ascertain whether they constituted a critical mass. He also asked for explanations concerning the three new posts proposed under subprogramme 7 (Supporting subregional activities for development) in order to be sure those posts were indispensable. Those requests were justified by the high vacancy rate within ECA.

73. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation acknowledged the value of the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa and supported the draft budget of the Commission and the proposed programme of work. It was concerned, however, to note that according to the report of the Advisory Committee, the vacancy rate had been 22 per cent in May 1999 although the Secretariat had stated that the process of recruitment and appointment had been improved and streamlined. In view of the high rate, his delegation wondered whether the proposals concerning the increase in the number of posts and the development of activities were justified.

74. His delegation also asked where in the budget the necessary funds would be found to subsidize the conference centres at Addis Ababa and Bangkok. It was stated in paragraph V.33 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/54/7) that the total running costs for the Centre were estimated at $3.2 million for the biennium 2000-2001 and that income was estimated at $801,000. However, under income section 2 an amount of $1.4 million was indicated for the rental of premises. The figures did not seem to add up and his delegation requested an explanation on that matter. It was also concerned by the fact that, according to the comments of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the estimates made at the time when the Centre was being built had not been realized, there was no marketing strategy and there appeared to be no plan designed to establish it as a revenue-producing operation. Until such time as his delegation had received an assurance that measures had been taken to rectify the situation, it could not agree to the operation of the Centre being subsidized.

75. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that section 16 was of particular importance for his delegation. It associated itself fully with the statement by the Group of 77 and China and welcomed the current process of reform in the majority of regional commissions which was evidence of the effort being made to utilize the slender available resources as effectively as possible. The cooperation that had been established between regional commissions should be encouraged.

76. His delegation was also concerned at the high vacancy rate in ECA and at the fact that, far from falling, the rate was on the increase. It recalled the provisions of paragraphs 68 and 69 of section III of resolution 52/220 in which the General Assembly requested that all posts budgeted for the biennium 1998-1999 should be filled. His delegation had taken note of the measures taken by the Secretariat to expedite the recruitment and appointment of personnel but wished to know how the Secretariat intended to fulfil its undertaking to bring down the vacancy rate to 5 per cent by the end of 1999.

77. Although the budget of the Commission had increased slightly, the proposed resources for 2000-2001, both under the regular budget and under extrabudgetary funds, were inadequate in view of the priority nature of its programme of work. His delegation was concerned, in particular, by the decrease in funding from funds and programmes.

78. His delegation supported the creation of new posts but stressed that they should be filled promptly, for otherwise there would be no point in creating them. It welcomed the proposed two new subprogrammes, but again drew attention to the provisions of section III, paragraph 70, of resolution 52/220, in which the General Assembly requested that any savings realized as a result of reform measures and efficiency gains from within ECA should be redeployed to the subregional centres. In that connection it would like to

know the impact of the redeployment of staff within subprogrammes on the implementation of the Commission's activities. It also wondered whether extrabudgetary funds were not usually envisaged for financing subprogramme 7.

79. His delegation deplored the delay in introducing new technology in ECA. It would like in particular to know the status of the installation of the VSAT unit, which had been expected before the end of 1999. The Conference Centre must be provided with the most up-to-date equipment and use sophisticated technology if the marketing strategy referred to by the representative of the United States was to be carried out. However, pending the time when it became profitable, the Centre should continue to receive support in order to ensure that it could function and to maintain it in good condition.

80. His delegation thought that ECA had excessive recourse to consultants and experts and would like to know whether it did not already have the necessary personnel for producing its general policy documents. It also noted that for want of an interpretation service ECA had to use costly freelance interpreters.

81. His delegation fully supported the efforts made by ECA to establish networks of research institutes and think-tanks in Africa; their impact would have to be evaluated in the future. It was glad that ECA was trying to promote the development of the African private sector. Given the development of capital markets, that was one of the means of enabling the continent to eradicate poverty.

82. **Mr. Daka** (Zambia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In view of the importance of the regional economic commissions, it noted with concern the high vacancy rate and would like to know what the current situation was. It also noted that in paragraph V.34 of its report the Advisory Committee observed that resources had been requested for the recruitment of freelance interpreters and translators. It would like to know whether it would not be less costly to establish a permanent team of interpreters in the Centre.

83. **Mr. Park** (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation was also worried about the high vacancy rate in the regional commissions and stressed that encouragement should be given to the measures taken in some cases to solve the problem by calling on assistance from the Office of Human Resources Management. A serious effort must be made to speed up recruitment, placement and transfer. His delegation also believed, as the Advisory Committee stated in paragraph V.6 of its report, that the redeployment of resources required a greater transparency and clear explanations.

84. His delegation welcomed the efforts made, in particular by ESCAP, to employ women in fields such as the fight against poverty, population, development of enterprises, and transfer of technology.

85. **Mr. Getachew** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Section 16 of the draft programme budget was very important for his delegation and, in the light of the reforms initiated by ECA, it regretted that the estimates for ECA represented only a very inadequate increase, equally as inadequate as the attention given to the development of Africa. It welcomed the inclusion of the two new subprogrammes and the creation of five new Professional posts but noted that those posts should have been financed through increased resources. It would also like sufficient resources to be allocated for new technology, so that ECA could make good the deficiencies noted in paragraph 16A.10 of the draft programme budget.

86. His delegation also regarded the high vacancy rate as worrying despite the action taken by the Office of Human Resources Management and it endorsed the opinion of the Advisory Committee and the comments made on the subject by CPC in paragraph 288 of its report. It also thought that the Secretariat should give due priority to the Addis Ababa Conference Centre in order to ensure that it was used.

87. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation fully supported the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and attached great importance to the work of the regional commissions, in particular ECA, for their fundamental purpose was to promote economic and social development. It drew attention in particular to the need to redouble efforts in the fight against poverty.

88. Her delegation noted with concern that the increase in the resources requested for ECA was too small when measured against the scope of the Commission's mandate, as was apparent from table 16A.1, and that an analysis by subprogramme did not reveal any reductions in activities (table 16A.8). It also found the proportion of extrabudgetary funds worrying, in particular in subprogrammes 2, 3 and 4, which were concerned with concrete actions and ought therefore to receive a larger proportion of their funding from the regular budget. Her delegation noted that ECA was proposing, for efficiency's sake, to limit the number of its meetings and publications, but it wondered about the impact of such a decision on the programme of work, especially as publications, according to paragraph 16A.9, were one of the

main vehicles for fulfilling most of the Commission's functions.

89. Her delegation was also concerned about the high percentage of vacant posts in ECA and would like to have a report on the present situation. It would also welcome an explanation of the 75 per cent cut in the resources allocated to subprogramme 5 (Promoting regional cooperation and integration), which it found very worrying.

90. Her delegation attached great importance to the work of the Regional Commissions New York Office, which was the subject of section 16.B of the draft programme budget, as a centre for coordinating the substantive and operational activities of the five regional commissions. It noted that owing to the increase in the number of its contacts with the permanent missions of Member States in New York the Office had seen its workload increase. As ACABQ itself noted in paragraph V.35 of its report, the resource estimates for the Office for the biennium 2000-2001 remained at the maintenance level. That matter warranted closer examination by the Fifth Committee in the informal consultations.

91. **Mr. Christian** (Ghana) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It would welcome an explanation of the decrease in funding from funds and programmes noted by ACABQ in paragraph V.17 of its report. It hoped that with the assistance of the Office of Human Resources Management it would be possible to reduce the vacancy rate from its May 1999 level of 22 per cent to five per cent by the end of 1999. His delegation supported the inclusion of the two new subprogrammes but wondered whether there would be sufficient resources to carry out all the subprogrammes, which had increased in number from 5 to 7.

92. **Mr. Kandanga** (Namibia) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was a matter for concern that the increase in resources proposed for section 16 of the proposed programme budget did not reflect the priority accorded to Africa's development, for which adequate resources should be made available. Given the high vacancy rate in the regional economic commissions, which was also of concern, in-house expertise should be strengthened to reduce the need for consultants. The inclusion under section 16 of a subprogramme on the advancement of women was welcome. As for the Addis Ababa conference centre, it should be managed more efficiently and allocated sufficient resources.

93. **Mr. Osewa** (Nigeria) said that his delegation associated itself fully with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He lamented the fact that the increase in resources envisaged for section 16 of the proposed programme budget failed to reflect Africa's needs. He supported the reforms under way within ECA to strengthen the programme of work and wished to know how the Secretariat proposed to deal with the vacancy rate in the Commission.

94. In Africa, total foreign direct investment in the private sector continued to fall. It had already decreased to $5 billion in 1996 after attaining a ceiling of $10 billion in 1992, with sub-Saharan Africa lagging behind all other regions in that regard. At the same time, African countries were faced with a huge foreign debt, which put a strain on their budgetary resources, and were desperately in need of debt-relief or debt-cancellation measures.

95. **Mr. Adam** (Israel) expressed concern that the resources proposed for section 16 of the proposed programme budget had not been increased and that they had even been reduced by 4.8 per cent in section C (Programme of work). It was also a matter for concern that the proportion of extrabudgetary resources to fund activities under section 16 was small in comparison with other sections relating to economic and social activities. The resources proposed under section 16 ought to reflect the priority given to the development of Africa in the global agenda.

96. **Mr. Nyamiobo** (Kenya) said that his delegation, which associated itself fully with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, attached particular importance to the regional economic commissions, which were in need of both human and financial resources to fulfil their mandate. In that regard, his delegation agreed with CPC that ECA should be accorded the necessary resources. Africa's development was, after all, a priority of the United Nations. Accordingly, he wished to know whether the vacancy rate in ECA would indeed be reduced to 5 per cent by the end of the year.

97. **Mr. Abdalla** (Sudan) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and was deeply concerned that the proposed increase in resources for section 16 was so slight and bore no relation to Africa's actual economic and social needs. His delegation wished to know what measures had been taken to reduce the vacancy rate at ECA, especially in the technical field. It was essential that ECA should implement its technological innovation programme in order to remedy any negative consequences stemming from its failure to keep up to date with new technologies.

98. **Mr. Yussuf** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the proposed organizational structure and distribution of posts for ECA under section 16 of the proposed programme budget contained subregional divisions of an administrative nature, whereas the organizational structure of other economic regional commissions contained only divisions affecting substantive issues of a concrete nature. The Secretariat should provide details of the Commission's actual activities. In fact, ECA should be accorded a tangible programme in accordance with Africa's wishes and needs.

99. **Mr. Bouhaddou** (Algeria) said it was his understanding that, when the proposed programme budget was taken up in first reading, the Secretariat officials managing the programmes included in the sections of the budget were expected to attend the meetings of the Fifth Committee. If such had been the case, however, the Secretariat would have been able to respond directly to the Tanzanian representative. He wished to know what practice was actually followed.

100. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), replying to the representative of Algeria, said that since 1980, the programme managers had introduced the activities in detail to CPC and that only the Controller and the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division attended the meetings of the Fifth Committee. Responding to questions put by the Tanzanian representative, he said that the organizational structure proposed for ECA was consistent with the structure established in the medium-term plan, which had been approved by the Fifth Committee itself on the basis of the recommendations of CPC. The organizational structure had been discussed in depth and stemmed from the rationalization of work agreed by ECA.

101. The vacancy rate, despite the efforts to speed up recruitment by the Office of Human Resources Management, currently stood at 28.2 per cent, which meant that of 216 posts under the regular budget of ECA, 61 remained vacant. A total of $3 million had been earmarked in the proposed programme budget for maintaining the Addis Ababa Conference Centre. To that amount, which should suffice, must be added repayments amounting to $800,000, which would be made by outside users of the Conference Centre. Accordingly, the amount of $800,000 in question was included in the total $1.4 million under income section 2, the remainder comprising income generated from the use of the Centre by United Nations bodies.

102. With regard to interpretation services, in view of the smaller number of meetings, it was currently cheaper to employ freelance interpreters. As for the new subprogramme 7 (Supporting subregional activities for development), it had previously formed part of subprogramme 5, for which the resources requested had been reduced substantially.

103. Now that all the issues concerning satellite telecommunications had been resolved, all that remained was to launch the system. A study had been carried out on the development of computing and information technology at ECA. Funding amounting to almost $1 million had been earmarked to that end in the proposed programme budget; to that funding should be added the $1.5 million which would be made available through internal redeployment, as would become apparent during consideration of the budget performance report.

104. With regard to the reduction of resources from funds and programmes, it was difficult to evaluate future extrabudgetary resources when drawing up the proposed programme budget. During preparation of the budget estimates for subprogramme 7, there had been no indication that extrabudgetary resources would become available.

105. **Mr. Monthe** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination), referring to substantive issues raised by the Tanzanian representative regarding the programme of work of ECA, recalled that, at its thirty-eighth session, during the revision of the medium-term plan, CPC had discussed the programme of work of ECA in depth and had heard the programme managers. On that occasion, he himself had questioned the soundness of the Commission's programme of work. Now that the medium-term programme of work had been revised and that CPC had made its recommendations, it would be better to await discussion of the next medium-term plan before resuming an in-depth discussion of the matter.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.